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Conflict Waged Wrong Way, MSU Expert Says

By George J. Barnann

Did Nixon Muff Chance in Vietnam?

EAST LANSING, Mich. — Fundamentally, the fight in Vietnam has been political, not military. And the American record in these last days, with victory still elusive, is one of failure, lost opportunities and — even worse — of destruction of the very aims we set out to reach at the beginning.

Indeed, this departure from Saigon and the paddy fields that, from the air, shine like stained glass, leaves the South Vietnamese trapped in authoritarian government — a situation far removed from those first hopes for national political stability in that unhappy land.

Dr. Wesley R. Fishel of Michigan State University turned around in the chair in his office on the campus here, after making those points, and said:

"Yes, we have finally managed to fail. Shall we say, we wrested defeat from the jaws of victory?"

The bouncy little professor, a longtime authority on Southeast Asia — he has been an active student of events there for 21 years, with a special interest ever since the U.S. involvement — was speaking of the United States in Vietnam "in a political sense," he explained.

"If we are talking in a military sense," he said, "there is no question but that we have managed to prevent the Communists from taking over. Without American intervention, they would have conquered South Vietnam and, therefore, in that sense, one could say it was a worthwhile involvement.

"But it was an inordinately costly one. It was not the way the conflict should have been fought. It should have been fought politically. We did not have to intervene massively."

WESLEY FISHEL HAS special credentials to talk about Vietnam and Southeast Asia.

The 52-year-old professor of political science and international relations served from 1954 to 1958, as adviser to the prime

minister of Vietnam. He was chief, from 1956 to 1958, of the controversial Michigan State University advisory group in Vietnam, on contract to Saigon and Washington.

Fishel has written extensively on Asian affairs in books, monographs and articles. He is the editor of "Southeast Asia, an International Quarterly." His most recent book is "Vietnam: Anatomy of a Conflict," a hefty collection of expert opinion — and judgment — on that conflict.

Perhaps Fishel is best known off campus for his work with the MSU Advisory Group. This drew considerable criticism a few years ago, chiefly through an article in "Ramparts" magazine. The article, "The University on the Make," said, among many things, that the project was a front for the CIA and that "Wesley" was a pretty big man in Saigon.

But Fishel, a native Cleveland and graduate of Cleveland Heights High School (1937), was talking at the moment about his feelings in view of the U.S. windup and of the South Vietnamese election of Oct. 3, in which Nguyen Van Thieu became president because he was the only candidate.

"Well," said Fishel, examining a copy of a column he wrote recently for the New York Times, "Government by Force" — which attracted a great deal of interest — "let me read this paragraph, which expresses my feelings at the present. I'm afraid they're not very happy ones."

Fishel wrote:

"FOR A GENERATION, Americans have spoken hopefully and optimistically of helping into being in South Vietnam a 'broadly based government of national unity.' Now, after 17 years of total involvement in Vietnamese internal affairs, the United States has sanctified in power a polished and ruthless military Machiavellian, heading a one-party military regime, authoritarian, institutionalized in its corruption, and lacking support among the people.

"In addition, we leave an undermined and American-weakened national assembly and a discredited supreme court. As both Duong Van Minh and Nguyen Cao Ky have warned, henceforth Thieu can govern only by force."

"You see," Fishel said, putting the paper down and speaking slowly and deliberately, "the key in my own thinking has been what initially interested me: the possibility of the Vietnamese developing a palatable alternative to the Communists and the French. I'm going way back now, you notice, back to 1950.

"My acute unhappiness now with our current policies stems, in some measure, from the fact that I think we have undermined — and possibly we have even destroyed — the very thing we set out to help achieve: the middle road of non-Communist national leadership.

"It's very interesting that President Nixon, who has been so bold with respect to China and on the economic front, has taken an essentially timid and rigid position with respect to South Vietnam. In a sense, while nothing, you know, is sure in political life, it seems to me that some kind of bold and imaginative approach to Vietnam might well have produced dividends for us."

Nixon "had a fine chance to leave something worthwhile behind" with the American departure.

"But I'm afraid he muffed it," Fishel said.

"WE HAD A CHANCE TO USE our leverage — and it's still there even if it's

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Tour of Duty

THE TEST. By Walter Adams.

(Macmillan, 240 pp., illustrated, \$6.95)

Reviewed by

Stephen Hess

The reviewer is national chairman of the White House Conference on Youth.

On April Fool's Day, 1969, Walter Adams, a noted professor of economics at Michigan State University, became the acting president of that institution; the following December, after a permanent president had been chosen, he went back to his classroom, as he always said he would.

Compressed into Adams' nine-month incumbency were all the challenges that face a contemporary university president; confrontations with white radicals; sit-ins staged by black students; Vietnam demonstrations; ROTC protests; a strike by university employees; heated debates over open admission and quota policies; angry demands by alumni, parents and legislators; attacks in the press.

"The Test" is the chronicle of this experience, written with all the grace and wit that distinguished his brief tour of duty.

Adams had two distinct advantages over some other university administrators. First, he was only to serve for a limited period and thus was well positioned to resist special-interest demands. Second, he was a proven political liberal whose views conveniently coincided with the mood of the campus. (Students, like the rest of us, can be more supportive of those with whom they agree than of those with whom they disagree.)

Yet it would be clear, even without the abundant endorsements the book provides, that Adams was superb. If this accounting finds him guilty of hubris, surely there are worse sins than pride.

While Adams chooses to tell his story "without elaborate efforts at generalization

or interpretation," certain themes emerge to account for his success at a time when the academic landscape was strewn with fallen men of good will. The lessons, however, are primarily of style, proving perhaps that university administration is more an art form than a science or even a profession. Given that few jobs of such authority have as little inherent power, this may be inevitable.

Lacking any prior administrative experience, Adams' most useful training could well have been his studies of the theater of the absurd. "The comic alone is capable of giving us the strength to bear the tragedy of existence," wrote Ionesco. Above all, Adams brought humor to his presidency, a humor that expressed a healthy irreverence toward himself, the bureaucracy, and those around him who took themselves too seriously.

To a student reporter asking about his vacation plans, Adams replied, "As the thirteenth president of MSU, I shall attend the thirteenth national convention of the Millard Fillmore Society which every thirteenth year awards a prize to some thirteenth president who most faithfully embodies the Fillmore ideal of being the most forgettable president in history." Hardly worthy of anthologizing, but nonetheless something of an achievement for a man under stress.

But mere laughter cannot explain Adams' achievement. The other dimensions he brought to the job were love and energy. He obviously cared deeply about people as individuals—individuals who were often young, formative, away from home, bewildered by the massiveness that surrounded them—and he made a Herculean effort to show his concern. He prowled the campus to talk with students or to just be seen at their events. He understood the importance of small acts and large symbols.

If Adams sought personal popularity from the students, it was as an adhesion for a campus that was threatened with unraveling, rather than as a panderer to popular notions, smothering dissent with approval. I think he rightly recognized the deep resentment that white, middle-class youth (still the vast majority of college students) hold against parents and teachers who abdicate mature responsibility in favor of some laissez-faire theory or sheer indolence.

(Interviews with 1,603 college freshmen by the American College Testing Program this year reveal such "surprising" youth opinions as: "A child needs discipline but must have love along with it to remain stable"; "(My best teacher) made you work hard enough so that when you got a good grade you were proud of it"; and even "I want my kids to have less than I did. I want them to work for what they want and feel the happiness of success and the pain of defeat.")

Adams was willing to take risks. He faced down SDSers, exposing them as monopolists of self-righteousness, unalterably opposed to his right to dissent from their views; he forced through internal reforms on a campus that had never even had a black cheerleader; he meant it when he threatened to close the university rather than accede to impossible labor demands.

In his book Adams illustrates a rare talent for objectively presenting all sides of an issue before explaining his "solution"—a technique that virtually invites the reader to become a Monday morning quarterback. Playing this game, I find him most exposed on the question of his participation in the Vietnam moratorium.

Along with Clark Kerr, John Gardner, and W. Allen Wallis, Adams had been one of the earliest and most eloquent opponents of university

often he found them willing to be seduced by federal money into activities that were dubious departures from their central mission. (Anyone seeking evidence of the consequences of this policy should read Vern L. Bullough's "Financial Crisis on the Campus" in the October issue of *The Progressive*.)

Yet Adams now writes that while "as a matter of abstract principle" he "had no difficulty opting for institutional neutrality," when the MSU students marched to the State Capitol to protest the war in Indochina, the university's president not only supported the march but led it. Adams' reasons for breaking with abstractions appear to be three. First, he was peeved by "the hypocrisy of the neutralist advocates" who had failed to take a stand when MSU was being used as a CIA cover. (But Adams had been no hypocrite.) Second, he was acting as an individual. (But Adams fully recognized that a president cannot shed his institutional identity.) Third, he felt that "the students deserved to know where their president stood." (But this contradicts his second reason; it is something the students should have already known; and is irrelevant, anyway.)

Reasons aside, who would care to predict how he or she would respond when 8,000 students form ranks and take off down Main Street? The key to the way Adams did respond is most likely found in another part of his book: "There is no 'solution' to a crisis," he writes, "One can only hope to endure and surmount it." Walter Adams, scholar, optimist, reluctant administrator, endured and his written record deserves to be the standard text for the 2,300 college and university presidents still on the firing line.

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After 1967 expose CIA sought new ties with campus, labor

By Crocker Snow Jr.
Globe Staff

The written report of a confidential discussion about Central Intelligence Agency operations held in 1968, a year after the public controversy over agency involvement with the National Student Assn., shows the CIA was anxious to establish new contacts with other student groups, foundations, universities, labor organizations and corporations for its overseas work.

The discussion was held in January 1968 among ranking government officials and former officials, including several former CIA officers, under the auspices of the Council on Foreign Relations in New York.

Though no direct quotes are attributed in the report, the opinion was stated by the discussion leader, Richard M. Bissell Jr., formerly a deputy director of the CIA, that: "If the agency is to be effective, it will have to make use of private institutions on an expanding scale, though these relations which have 'blown' cannot be resurrected."

The discussion also referred to the continued utility of labor groups and American corporations to CIA operations. No such groups or corporations are named.

The written report, like others sponsored by the council, is considered by the participants as "confidential" and "completely off the record."

The document is being circulated by the Africa Research Group, a small, radically oriented organization headquartered in Cambridge, because "it offers a still-relevant primer on the theory and practice of CIA manipulations."

Portions of the document are scheduled to appear today in the "University Review," a New York-based monthly.

The document reflects individual assessments of the CIA by those present. The report includes a number of general statements:

—The two elements of CIA activity, "intelligence collection" and "covert action" (or "intervention") are not separated within the agency but are considered to "overlap and interact."

—The focus of classical espionage in Europe and other developed parts of the world had shifted "toward targets in the underdeveloped world."

—Due to the clear jurisdictional boundary between the CIA and FBI, the intelligence agency was "adverse to surveillance of US citizens overseas (even when specifically requested) and adverse to operating against targets in the United States, except for foreigners here as transients."

—The acquisition of a secret speech by Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev in February 1956 was a classic example of the political use of secretly acquired intelligence. The State Department released the text which, according to one participant, prompted "the beginning of the split in the Communist movement." Since this speech had been specifically targeted before acquired, the results meant to this participant that "if you get a precise target and go after it, you can change history."

—"Penetration," by establishing personal relationships with individuals rather than simply hiring them, was regarded as especially useful in the underdeveloped world. The statement is made that "covert intervention (in the underdeveloped world) is usually designed to operate on the internal power balance, often with a fairly short-term objective."

—The reconnaissance of

during the '50s provided "limited but dramatic results. Flights were late of the cancelled scheduled summit between President Eisenhower and Premier Khrushchev after Francis G. Gary Powers was shot down in Laos.)

"After five days flights were from the Russian these operation highly secret in States, and with son," reads the these overflight 'leaked' to the press, the US have been forced action."

The meeting, was not to consider CIA missions so characterize general concepts and proceed discussion was led of a council staff "Intelligence as Policy."

The chairman meeting was William H. Sullivan, an investment banker who had served in Washington as undersecretary of State and Secretary of the Treasury in the Kennedy Administration.

Twenty persons were listed as attending including prominent former officials and educators like Harry Howe Ransome of Vanderbilt University and David B. Truman, president of Mt. Holyoke College.

The list included Allen W. Dulles, former director of the CIA, and Robert Amory Jr., who had been deputy director, as well as Bissell, who had been deputy director until shortly after the Bay of Pigs invasion, in which the CIA was involved.

The discussion took place just a year after revelations by Ramparts Magazine concerning CIA-funded training of agents for South Vietnam at

The document includes the statement that "it is notably true of the subsidies to student, labor and cultural groups that have recently been publicized that the agency's objective was never to control their activities, only occasionally to point them in a particular direction, but primarily to enlarge them and render them more effective."

In an article in the Saturday Evening Post in May 1967, Thomas Braden, who had helped set up the subsidies with Dulles, defended the concept as a way to combat the seven major front organizations of the Communist world in which the Russians through the use of their international fronts had stolen the great words such as peace, justice and freedom."

The report shows that the publicity had not been as damaging to CIA activities